

Amendments to the Claims

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1 through 13 (previously cancelled)

14. (currently amended) A method of obtaining images and a status of a camera, the method comprising:

    sending a new image, if the new image is different from an old image; and

    sending a heartbeat to indicate the status of the camera, if the new image is not different from the old image, wherein the new image is sent periodically at a first rate, and the heartbeat is sent periodically at a second rate.

15. (previously cancelled)

16. (previously amended) The method of claim 14, wherein the heartbeat is sent only if a series of new images were the same as the old images.

17. (previously cancelled)

18. (previously amended) The method of claim 21, further comprising resetting the second timer when the new image is sent.

19. (previously cancelled)

20. (previously cancelled)

21. (currently amended) A method of obtaining images and a status of a camera, the method comprising:

- sending a new image, if the new image is different from an old image;
- sending a heartbeat to indicate the status of the camera, if the new image is not different from the old image;
- using a first timer to periodically send the new images; and
- using a second timer, to send the heartbeat, if no new images were sent within a period.

22. (new) A method of confirming the working status of a camera system, the method comprising:

- capturing a first image with the camera system;
- capturing a second image with the camera system;
- determining whether the second image is different from the first image;
- and
- indicating that the camera system is working by communicating a heartbeat from the camera system to an image server in response to a determination that the second image is not different from the first image.

23. (new) The method of claim 22, further comprising communicating the second image to the image server in response to a determination that the second image is different from the first image.

24. (new) The method of claim 23, further comprising processing the second image to produce a processed second image.

25. (new) The method of claim 24, wherein the step of processing the second image is performed before the step of communicating the second image to the image server, wherein the second image communicated to the image server is the processed second image.

26. (new) The method of claim 23, wherein the second image is communicated in response to a determination that the second image is different from the first image after a first period of time has elapsed from the step of determining whether the second image is different from the first image, and

wherein the heartbeat is communicated in response to a determination that the second image is not different from the first image after a second period of time has elapsed from the step of determining whether the second image is different from the first image.

27. (new) The method of claim 26, wherein said first period of time is approximately equal to said second period of time.

28. (new) The method of claim 26, wherein said second period of time is greater than said first period of time.

29. (new) The method of claim 22, wherein the steps of capturing a first image and capturing a second image are performed periodically at a first rate.

30. (new) The method of claim 29, wherein the step of indicating that the camera system is working is performed less frequently than the first rate.

31. (new) The method of claim 22, further comprising:

capturing a succession of images subsequent to the step of capturing a second image, the succession comprising successive images, wherein each image of said succession is determined to be not different from the prior image of said succession; and

counting the number of successive images as each is determined to be not different from the respective prior image;

wherein the step of indicating that the camera is working is performed when said number of successive images reaches a predetermined value.

32. (new) The method of claim 22, wherein the step of determining whether the second image is different from the first image comprises determining whether the difference between the second image and the first image exceeds a threshold.

33. (new) The method of claim 22, wherein the first image and the second image each provide a view of an environment, wherein the step of determining whether the second image is different from the first image comprises detecting motion in the environment, said motion occurring between the steps of capturing the first image and capturing the second image.

34. (new) The method of claim 22, wherein the size of the heartbeat is substantially less than the size of the second image.

35. (new) The method of claim 22, wherein the heartbeat comprises one of a compressed version of the first image or a compressed version of the second image.

36. (new) The method of claim 22, wherein the heartbeat comprises a time stamp.

37. (new) The method of claim 22, wherein the heartbeat is a single bit.

38. (new) A computer readable medium comprising instructions capable of performing the method of claim 22.

39. (new) A computer system programmed to perform the method of claim 22.